DATELINE: #119 WASHINGTON, D.C. OCTOBER 13, 1976
ALINA ZERANSKI

MAKING LIFELONG FRIENDS
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: DATELINE: WASHINGTON, D.C. --PICTURES IN SOUND OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS HERE IN THE CAPITAL OF THE UNITED STATES -- BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA EACH WEEK AT THIS TIME. TODAY, A REPORT PREPARED BY ALINA ZERANSKI ON A VISIT TO AN ORGANIZATION OF VOLUNTEERS WHERE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO DECIDE WHO IS THE GIVER AND WHO THE TAKER.

NARR: YOU COULD SWEAR THAT YOU ARE WATCHING A REHEARSAL OF A PLAY. A SMALL GROUP OF WOMEN TAKE DIFFERENT ROLES. ONE BECOMES A FRUSTRATED TEENAGER, ANOTHER ONE IS TRYING TO BEFRIEND HER, STILL ANOTHER BECOMES A JEALOUS MOTHER. ONLY THEY ARE NOT ON STAGE, BUT IN THE OFFICE OF AN ORGANIZATION CALLED BIG SISTERS OF WASHINGTON, D.C., AND THIS IS A TRAINING SESSION FOR VOLUNTEERS WHO WILL BECOME ADOPTED SISTERS OF SOME LONELY LITTLE GIRLS. THEY HAVE JUST SEEN A FILM SHOWING A SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENT OF A RELATIONSHIP. THEY DISCUSSED PROBLEMS THAT MIGHT COME UP, AND THEY PLAYED ROLES PRETENDING TO DEAL WITH THEM.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- METCALF:

"THE PURPOSE OF OUR PROGRAM IS GUIDANCE THROUGH FRIENDSHIP. WE MATCH WOMEN WITH YOUNG GIRLS ON A ONE TO ONE BASIS, SO THAT WOMEN CAN ACT AS REAL MODELS AND HELP GUIDE THE CHILD THROUGH HER ADOLESCENCE AND CHILDHOOD PROBLEMS... THERE ARE MANY WOMEN WHO WANT AND COME FORWARD TO BE BIG SISTERS VOLUNTARILY. WE HAVE ABOUT 200 BIG SISTERS WHO ARE WAITING TO BE MATCHED, WHOM WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE YET TO MATCH WHICH SHOWS AN OVERWHELMING RESPONSE FROM ADULTS. ON THE

TAPE: (CONT'D) CONTRARY, WITH OUR LITTLE SISTERS WE FOUND THAT WE HAVE TO SEEK THEM OUT... SO WE HAD BEEN NOTIFYING PARENTS AND SCHOOLS AND OTHER AGENCIES."

NARR: THIS WAS SHARON METCALF, DIRECTOR OF THE BIG SISTERS ORGANIZATION, AN ORGANIZATION SUPPORTED BY FIVE LOCAL FOUNDATIONS. SHE AND HER SECRETARY ARE THE ONLY PAID EMPLOYEES. ALL OTHER SEVEN MEMBERS OF THE STAFF AND THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ARE VOLUNTEERS, EXPERIENCED SOCIAL WORKERS WHO DONATE THEIR SPARE TIME ON EVENINGS AND WEEKENDS TO INTERVIEW PROSPECTIVE BIG SISTERS, TRAIN AND SUPERVISE THEM. THERE ARE FORTY WOMEN CURRENTLY UNDERGOING TRAINING.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- METCALF:

"THE IDEA FIRST BEGAN ABOUT TWENTY YEARS AGO. BUT IT WAS RUN BY VOLUNTEERS AND IT WASN'T A FULL TIME ORGANIZATION, AND SO THERE WERE NOT ENOUGH PEOPLE TO ACTUALLY TRAIN AND MATCH THE BIG SISTERS. SO LAST YEAR, THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS DECIDED TO WRITE SOME PROPOSALS AND GET FOUNDATION GRANTS. AND THEN WE BEGAN TO HIRE THE STAFF, AND SO NOW WE HAVE ON GOING TRAINING CLASSES AND ON GOING MATCHING... THE CHILDREN ARE FROM AGES EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN, AND THEY ARE CHILDREN FROM EVERYWHERE. MANY ARE FROM THE URBAN, CITY AREA AND THE MORE POVERTY STRICKEN AREAS, BUT WE ALSO HAVE HAD GIRLS FROM THE BETTER AREAS WHERE PERHAPS BOTH PARENTS WORK OR ARE AWAY, AND THEY DON'T GET ENOUGH ADULT EMOTIONAL SUPPORT. SO THE BIG SISTERS PROVIDE THEM THIS EXTRA SUPPORT AND ALSO TAKE THEM INTO THEIR HOMES AND LET THEM EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT KINDS OF THINGS."

NARR: THIS PROJECT WAS BASED ON THE LONG-ESTABLISHED AND PROVEN NETWORK OF BIG BROTHERS ORGANIZATIONS FOR BOYS. NOW YOU CAN ALSO FIND BIG SISTERS IN MOST AMERICAN CITIES. MANY OF THE 89 WOMEN ALREADY MATCHED HERE WITH LONELY LITTLE GIRLS HAD MISSED CHILDREN IN THEIR LIVES. THEY ARE CLERKS, ATTORNEYS, NURSES, BANK OFFICERS -- WOMEN FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE. OTHERS ARE HOUSEWIVES

NARR: (CONT'D) WITH FAMILIES OF THEIR OWN AND HEARTS BIG ENOUGH TO ACCOMMODATE ONE MORE CHILD. ON THE AVERAGE, THEY SEE THEIR LITTLE SISTERS ONCE A WEEK.

KATHY LIBBY, IS A YOUNG WOMAN WITH A MASTER'S DEGREE, WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT SOCIAL PROGRAMS.

TAPE: CUT THREE -- LIBBY:

"I THINK, LIKE MANY OTHER PEOPLE, I SAT DOWN ONE DAY AND DECIDED THAT ALTHOUGH I HAD A VERY BUSY LIFE, I WAS BUSILY ENGAGED IN MY OWN INTERESTS AND WONDERED IF THERE WERE NOT AN ORGANIZATION I COULD JOIN AND BE VERY PERSONNALY INVOLVED IN. AND I WONDERED IF THERE WAS HERE SOMETHING CALLED BIG SISTERS, FOUND THE TELEPHONE NUMBER IN THE TELEPHONE BOOK AND CALLED IT. I'D SAY, IT IS A PERFECT ORGANIZATION FOR ME BECAUSE, AS SHARON MENTIONED, OF A ONE TO ONE RELATIONSHIP, AND THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT IT IS. IT IS GIVING OF YOURSELF TO A NEW FRIEND."

NARR: KATHY CONSIDERS HER "LITTLE SISTER" A LIFELONG FRIEND, NOT A TEMPORARY SITUATION. HER "LITTLE SISTER" HAD POLIO AND SHE GOES TO A SPECIAL HIGH SCHOOL FOR HANDICAPPED CHILDREN. SHE COMES FROM A BLACK FAMILY OF LOWER SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND AND GREW UP IN ONE OF THE POOREST NEIGHBORHOODS OF WASHINGTON. SHE BENEFITS FROM THIS RELATIONSHIP IN MANY WAYS. SHE IS GETTING NOW INTO THE WORLD SHE WAS NEVER EXPOSED TO. SHE ENJOYS MEETING KATHY'S FRIENDS. HER BIG SISTER HELPS HER GO THROUGH HER DEPRESSIONS AND NORMAL PROBLEMS OF ADOLESCENCE. SHE ENCOURAGES AND HELPS HER WITH HER STUDIES. FOR THE FIRST TIME, SOMEONE SUGGESTED TO THIS PARALYZED TEENAGER THAT SHE MIGHT GO TO COLLEGE. KATHY KNOWS ALSO HOW TO LAUGH WITH HER WHEN SHE FEELS LIKE BEING SILLY.

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- LIBBY:

"I BASICALLY SEE HER ABOUT ONCE EVERY TWO WEEKS...SOMETIMES IT IS AN EVENING DURING THE WEEK. IF THERE IS A SCHOOL EVENT THAT SHE'D LIKE ME TO TAKE HER TO, I'D DO THAT, OTHERWISE GENERALLY ON A SATURDAY. SHE LIKES TO GO SHOPPING AS A SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD, AND WE OFTEN SHOP. MY LITTLE SISTER IS HANDICAPPED.... SHE HAD NOT BEEN EXPOSED TO A LOT OF SOCIAL ACTIVITY BECAUSE OF HER PHYSICAL, SHE IS IN A WHEEL CHAIR, AND THEREFORE SHE IS LIMITED WHERE SHE CAN GO BY HERSELF. SO WE GO TO RESTAURANTS AND MOVIES AND PLAYS AND MUSEUMS. SOMETIMES WE JUST COME TO MY HOUSE AND COOK A PIZZA."

NARR: THE PROGRAM ALSO SERVES GIRLS WITH PROBLEMS OF TRUANCY, FROM BROKEN HOMES, GIRLS WHO HAVE DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL, HANDICAPPED GIRLS -- ANY GIRL IN NEED OF EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FROM AN ADULT OUTSIDE OF THE FAMILY. BUT THE BIG SISTERS ARE NOT JUST THE GIVERS. THEY DON'T FEEL THAT THEY ARE DOING SOMEONE A FAVOR. THEY THOROUGHLY ENJOY THIS FRIENDSHIP. IT IS A VERY PERSONALIZED SHARING, AN EXAMPLE OF VOLUNTEERISM EQUALLY BENEFITING BOTH PARITES.

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